



## ■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:

2023 marks 25 years since I first visited Oaxaca. It was one of those turning points that people have in their lives. From that first visit, I knew that God wanted me to help the poor of Oaxaca. I was 54 when I first visited. I was ordained 27 years and had worked with the poor in Washington, DC. My Franciscan vocation influenced the way that I interacted with the poor. I wanted to follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi.



*St. Francis statue at artisanal market in Puebla, Mexico*

When St. Francis was coming down the mountain after receiving the five wounds of Jesus in his flesh, he encountered a farmer who recognized him. The farmer said to Francis: “You better be as holy as people say you are!” Since then, that challenge has echoed down the centuries for all men and women who follow the charism of St. Francis.

Holiness is not something you achieve. It is something that happens to you while you are living out your Christian vocation. For followers of St. Francis, two Beatitudes capture his understanding of holiness. The first Beatitude is: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Francis called himself: “Your little brother Francis.” He knew that his relationship with people needed to be built on meekness and not power. He had seen in his own days how power was abused in the Church and in the political arena. His meekness allowed him to interact with people whether they were a Muslim Sultan or a leper.

The second Beatitude that captures Francis’ growth in holiness is: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Francis loved poor people because he saw the face of Jesus in them. He wanted his brothers to have a heart for the poor. Their meekness would allow them to show mercy without embarrassing the poor. Francis taught his brothers that in showing the poor mercy, God would have mercy on them.

Each time that I visited Oaxaca, I made sure that I made the people comfortable by my gentleness, my sense of humor and my ability to laugh at myself when I was making mistakes learning Spanish. As the people came to realize that I was not present to exercise power, some of them began calling me *padrecito*, (which is a term of endearment meaning little father).

The poor of Oaxaca taught me the value of family life, the importance of their faith, and the need to look after each other. I have often heard it said that when you help the poor you receive more from the experience than what you give. This certainly has been the case in my life.

May Easter this year bring you many blessings!

Fr. Scott

## ■ Servant Leadership – La Primera Piedra- by Charley B. Gates, MD

“Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.” Napoleon Hill

Ideas are powerful. Most of the decisive moments in history have centered on a single, powerful idea. The Declaration of Independence was based on the idea that “all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.” Abraham Lincoln’s presidency centered on the idea to preserve the Union to ensure that “government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the Earth.” Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech focused on the idea that people are judged “not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

These ideas are powerful because of their ability to inspire. An inspirational idea plants itself firmly in the mind. The mind then recognizes the people, information, and opportunities around you that will help to bring that idea to life. The mind does this through its remarkable ability to focus. The mind automatically filters out the noise in the environment surrounding us and identifies relevant information. This explains why in a crowded and noisy room, you snap to attention when you hear your name called. Or, after shopping for a particular model of car, you suddenly start to notice that car everywhere. An inspirational idea planted firmly in the mind programs the mind to search for and find ways to achieve the desired outcome.

I was reminded of the power of an idea when I visited Father Renteria and the Church of Santa Cecilia in Oaxaca in December. During my visit, I spent time at the “Primera Piedra,” the first stone laid during the construction. The stone is quite nondescript and simply bears the words “Primera Piedra” along with the date of November 14, 2008. At that time, the community faced many challenges. The idea was to build a Church that would unite the community and serve as a safe haven for worship and gathering. The many blessings that the Church of Santa Cecilia has brought to the community reflect the power of this idea. Some of these blessings include:

- The School of Music that accommodates more than 150 low-income students
- International recognition and financial support
- Designation by the local government of the neighborhood as an official “barrio” (neighborhood) which brought more public services
- Diminished crime and increased community spirit

TASH financed much of the construction of the physical buildings of Santa Cecilia and continues to partner with its local leadership to this day. Projects like Santa Cecilia are a welcome byproduct of twenty-three years of TASH’s visible



Board Visit to the Music School in Vicente Guerrero

*Servant Leadership, continued*

presence on the front lines of helping the poor in Oaxaca through La Clínica del Pueblo, “Anna Seethaler”, A.C.

La Clínica also had its beginning in an idea. Father Scott first visited Oaxaca in 1998 and was deeply moved by the dire situation that the poor faced when seeking quality, affordable healthcare. He conceived of the idea of a hospital dedicated to serving the poor. I can only imagine the innumerable challenges that such a project faced!

Undaunted, Father preached his idea. This inspired a torrent of support, both locally in Oaxaca and in the United States. This led to the successful acquisition of the land (no easy task in Mexico), the design and construction of the buildings, and the hiring of staff and leadership. The hospital opened its doors on January 1, 2000, and continues to serve its mission faithfully to this day. During my visits to Oaxaca, I have been a witness to the life-changing care that many patients have received at La Clínica.

Both the origins of Santa Cecilia and La Clínica predate my association with TASH. Regardless, I am proud to say that the TASH Board continues to pursue the inspirational ideas of these institutions with undiminished vigor.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. God love you.

Charley B. Gates, MD

President, TASH Board of Directors

## ■ Witness to Oaxaca – by Pete Noll



*Clínica staff testing for type 2 diabetes.*

As Fr. Scott shared, he made his first trip to Oaxaca 25 years ago. Despite inevitable change, much remains the same. While Oaxaca is more on the tourist radar having been highlighted in *Travel + Leisure* magazine 2022 Best Awards as the “#1 best city in the world”, being on the ground, the stark reality is that the majority of the people continue to face enormous challenges to cover basic needs of health, education, and a living wage. With rising medical costs, exacerbated by the lack of access to affordable health care and social services, **the mission of La Clínica del Pueblo, “Anna Seethaler” is as relevant today, as ever.**

What I continue to find particularly inspiring is La Clínica del Pueblo’s holistic approach to focusing on the patients’ needs. La Clínica provides the patient a humanistic experience, unfound in almost any other hospital in Oaxaca. In addition, La Clínica is expanding its scope to provide more community-based interventions to promote better health practices and prevent common illnesses. From October

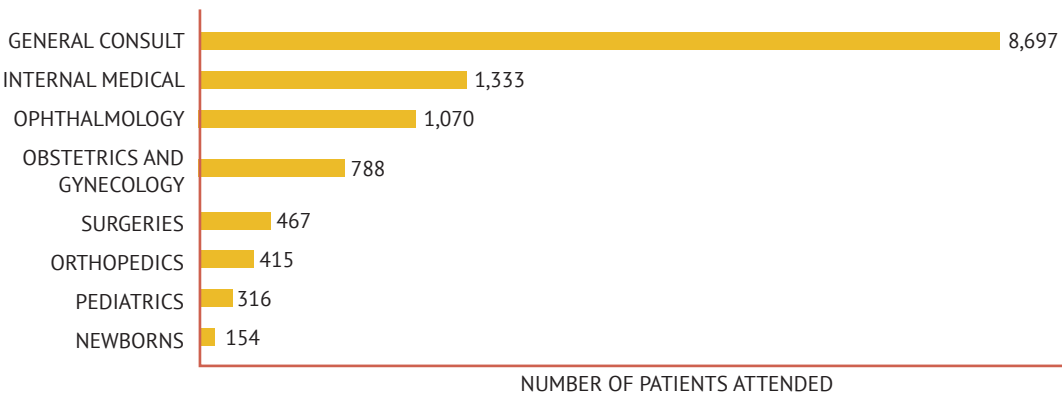
to April, the community health outreach team has a goal to test 3,000 patients to get ahead of type 2 diabetes. They will also target strategies to improve nutrition, mental health, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) in 2023. I am fully confident that we will be celebrating the official 25th anniversary of the opening of La Clínica doors, at our high mark.

And as Fr. Scott shared in The Legacy of TASH video, found on the home page of [www.tashinc.org](http://www.tashinc.org) **“I think there are people on the ground that are absolutely committed to my dream and I believe that La Clínica can go on for decades and decades, with the right heart and right mind and the right commitment.”** Of course, we can’t achieve these goals alone, and it is because of your generosity that we can continue to be bold in our expansion of La Clínica’s programs and services. We hope that together, we’ll be a part of this exciting push, as we come upon a quarter century of service to the poor in Oaxaca.

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*Witness to Oaxaca, continued*

Here are key numbers from 2022:



***In the Numbers:***

- La Clínica del Pueblo has 23 years operating
- Open 24/7, 365 days a year
- 193,000 patients served and counting
- Renovated X-ray room



*José Raúl getting much needed medical attention at La Clínica*

Each number on the bar chart represents a real-life story. Here is one of them. José Raúl Reyes was born in Santa María Atzompa Oaxaca on March 19, 1939. He shared with us that he only made it through third grade, as his teacher would often hit him with the chalkboard eraser. At that young age, he went to work in the fields and took care of the goats and donkey on their property. He would live a peasant farmer lifestyle for the next 50 years, until his knees and back would give out at age 71.

At 21, he married Modesta García Torres, and together they had 4 sons and 2 daughters. However, Modesta died at 31 from a lung infection. He never remarried. He now lives with his 80-year old sister in a humble two room adobe house. They only make ends meet with a small government subsidy (similar to Social Security) of about \$300 per month. Recently, Jose began to have trouble with his left eye. Fortunately, a person in the nearby market recommended they go to La Clinica del Pueblo, and he could request free care. The ophthalmologist diagnosed him with cataracts, and he was quickly programmed in for surgery. The surgery is scheduled for next week and will be 100% covered thanks to La Clinica and our generous donor community.



**FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES**



We hope that you will join us as a sponsor, race participant, volunteer, or race day attendee as **we aim to set a new bar with a \$150,000 fundraising goal to celebrate the 15th edition of the Ole 5k Benefit.** This year, we will be organizing a sponsor “Building Bridges Brunch and private Mass” at St. Augustine’s Friary on Sunday, October 8.

100% of the proceeds will be sent to our projects in Oaxaca, Mexico, where many families must get by on \$5 - \$7 per day. With great need comes great generosity. Family fun for a worthy cause! You can find more information and updates: [www.ole5k.com](http://www.ole5k.com)

**If you would like to make a donation to support the mission in Oaxaca, we would truly appreciate it.**

Please make a check out to TASH, Inc. and use the donation envelope included or you can make a secure donation online at [www.tashinc.org](http://www.tashinc.org).



*Do you use social media? Follow @tashincorg for updates on our work.*